

POLICING AUTHORITY ASSESSMENT OF POLICING PERFORMANCE



AN TÚDARÁS PÓILÍNEACHTA
POLICING AUTHORITY

December
2024

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
1. Introduction	6
2. Report Structure	6
3. Performance Framework	7
3.1. Policing Priorities	7
3.2. Garda Síochána Strategy Statement	7
3.3. Policing Plan	8
4. Progress against the Policing Plan & Policing Priorities	9
4.1. Progress against the Policing Plan	9
4.2. Progress against the Priorities	10
4.2.1. Protecting and Supporting Victims and the Vulnerable	10
4.2.2. Supporting and Ensuring Community Safety	15
4.2.3. Tackling Organised and Serious Crime.....	18
4.2.4. Rights Based and Ethical Service Delivery	21
4.2.5. Development of the Capacity to Strategically Manage Garda Resources	23
5. Spotlight on Data & Technology	27
5.1. Where it started.....	27
5.2. Progressing from siloed ICT systems to a Data & Technology vision and infrastructure	27
5.3. What now?	31
5.4. Conclusion.....	32

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The main function of the Policing Authority is to oversee the performance of the Garda Síochána in the provision of policing services and this report offers our assessment of the Garda Síochána's performance during the first half of 2024 and the progress that was made against the Policing Plan and the Policing Priorities for 2024.

The report is based on analysis of several reports received from the Garda Síochána, as well as extensive engagement with various stakeholders, both internal and external to the Garda Síochána. Its aim is to highlight the Garda Síochána's achievements through the period reported, as well as to note the areas that present challenges or risks, and which the Authority will continue to monitor closely.

This report also offers a focus on data and technology within the Garda Síochána, noting the progress that has been made from individualised ICT systems to a Data & Technology vision and infrastructure, with the welcome introduction of a number of new systems and its evident impact on frontline policing and the service to the public.

Key observations:

- Eleven of the 18 targets in the Policing Plan 2024 were reported as 'at-risk' by the end of June, with none being reported 'off-target'. A key issue causing targets to be reported as 'at-risk' was resourcing.
- No target is marked as 'off-target' at this point but the Authority would question the degree to which this is an accurate reflection of the organisation's position given known resourcing issues.,
- As in previous years, **resources continue to be highlighted as a barrier to achieving the targets**, with recruitment and retention of personnel an ongoing challenge for the organisation. It is unlikely that the organisation will achieve the strength of 15,000 garda members in the short term. This is despite notable efforts being made and practices introduced to enhance and speed up the recruitment process, the development of a **Recruitment and Retention Strategy** and the introduction of **exit interviews**. However, the Authority reiterates its view that the **Recruitment & Retention Strategy, the Strategic Workforce Plan, and the Training Strategy be put in place** in the very near future, to allow the organisation to better oversee and manage their personnel resources and plan for the future.
- The supporting functions - human resources, information and communication technology, finance and estate - continue to modernise through the Operating Model and technology upgrades. The organisation does not however have **fit-for-purpose information systems in the areas of finance and human resources**.
- Significant progress was reported in the first half of 2024 in relation to the implementation of the recommendations from the Garda Inspectorate's report on Child Sexual Abuse. Specifically, the introduction of an **electronic notification system between the Garda Síochána and Tusla**. Important progress was also made in the process of introducing three additional **Barnahus centres**, which bring all the various services required by a child victim of abuse into one child-centred location.
- The Garda Síochána's approach to **Domestic Abuse** was found to be at the forefront of Garda management meetings, with a close monitoring of the mandatory **7-day call back for victims** of domestic violence and improving the rate which remained above 74% throughout the first half of 2024. However, inconsistencies across Regions and Divisions were found, which must be

addressed by the organisation to ensure the best service is provided to victims, irrespective of geographic location.

- With the rise in protests surrounding the introduction of accommodation centres for International Protection Applicants, the role of **Community Policing** is more important than ever. In many areas community policing units are being bolstered with additional Gardaí, which highlights the importance the organisation is placing on policing with communities - despite the resources challenge. However, in terms of **public order**, the review of public order policing, conducted by the Authority, found that while significant progress has been made since the publication of the Garda Síochána Inspectorate Report “Public Order Policing” in 2019, **some of its key recommendations remain incomplete**.
- The efforts to make our roads safer saw the introduction of **30 minutes of high-visibility roads policing per shift**, to be carried out by all uniformed members. The Garda Síochána is reporting that **the number of lifesaver offences and lifesaver detections (for example, use of seatbelts and mobile phones) has increased by 12% across the country**. The full impact of these additional 30 minutes will be examined at year end, with the availability of more comprehensive information and statistics.
- The **Garda Mobility Device** is continuing to be an important tool in policing. With continual upgrades and addition of apps it is streamlining processes for the Garda Síochána. One of the most recent apps to be added to the devices is the ability to find up-to-date insurance details for cars while out on the road. This has led to a **74% increase in the number of vehicles seized** in the first half of 2024 compared to the same period in 2023. Additional apps to improve policing services are being developed continually.
- Continued success in the Garda Síochána’s response to **organised crime** with major international and national groups, networks and routes operating in Ireland is being reported as disrupted in the first half of 2024. However, concerns remain in relation to the Garda Síochána’s response to **drug-related intimidation (DRI)**. The Authority is conscious that tackling DRI is not a matter for policing alone, however it is still concerned at the prevalence of this phenomenon in our society and stresses that progress is needed in working with communities and families to build trust and confidence to report safely.
- Little progress has been made in the first half of 2024 in relation to the introduction of **in-career vetting**. While the Authority is aware of the dependency on the legislation, as noted above, it is of the view that given the importance of in-career vetting and its potential to protect the vulnerable, more progress could, and should, have been made. Furthermore, the Authority is concerned about **the lack of an effective performance management system** for Garda members or Garda Staff that allows a constructive discussion with their direct supervisor on performance of their role.
- There has been a decrease in the number of Garda suspensions. However, the lengthy nature of some of these suspensions remains an issue, as this is a matter that impacts Garda resources, members’ wellbeing and public confidence.
- At the end of June 2024, **16 of the 21 Garda divisions had fully implemented the Operating Model** structure. The implementation of the Operating Model in two thirds of Garda divisions is an important milestone. However, it was reported to the Authority that the implementation of the model in the remaining 5 divisions will be challenging, due to staffing and accommodation issues, and it is unlikely that all 21 divisions will have the Operating Model implemented by year end. It was further reported to the Authority by Garda members in divisions where the

Operating Model has been rolled out that it is difficult to achieve the full advantages and potential envisaged, given the current state of resource shortages, to include staff, facilities and accommodation.

- As noted above, **Data & Technology** within the Garda Síochána is an area which saw significant progress and improvement in the last couple of years. The development and introduction of a Data and Technology vision and plan which places the delivery of effective information led policing at its core highlights the importance of data and technology to the delivery of a policing service. Some key systems which were introduced and are having a considerable, positive impact on service delivery are the **Investigation Management System (IMS)**, **Garda Mobility Devices**, **GardaSAFE** and most recently, the pilot for the use of **Body Worn Cameras**. The Authority is aware that there is a desire and a need for continued momentum to the progression and development of technology in the organisation. Without that sustained investment, the progress made will regress as investment is required not only for new systems but also to continually enhance existing systems so that they do not fall behind. The Authority further notes that as technology is continuously evolving, there is a need within the organisation for an **overarching policy** on the use of technology in policing. This is important to ensure that principles such as fairness, proportionality, legality and non-discrimination are appropriately addressed and enforced as technology increases policing capability.

1. Introduction

This *Assessment of Policing Performance* is the latest in a series of bi-annual reports produced by the [Policing Authority](#) that assess the performance of the Garda Síochána. The reports are provided to the Minister for Justice, the Garda Commissioner, and other stakeholders, and are made publicly available through the Authority's website. The reports are important in providing transparency to the communities that the Garda Síochána serves, the Garda workforce, and other stakeholders in relation to policing performance, the oversight of policing, and the outcomes of that work.

Given the size and operational scale of the Garda Síochána, the report does not attempt to capture the totality of Garda performance but rather seeks to highlight major, notable or important achievements, as well as the identification of areas of emergent or persistent challenge or risk.

This report offers an assessment on progress against the Policing Plan 2024 to the end of June.

2. Report Structure

Following this introductory section, Section 2 provides an overview of the statutory performance framework that sets the short and medium-term strategic and operational direction of the Garda Síochána. This is used to monitor and assess performance.

Section 3 considers the Garda Síochána Policing Plan 2024. The Plan sets out the commitments the Garda Síochána makes to the public in any year and what it intends to achieve to ensure an effective policing service is delivered. This section provides an assessment of the progress made in the first half of the year to implement this plan. It also identifies challenges faced in its implementation and uses the five Policing Priorities 2022-2024 and key measures of success to structure that assessment.

Section 4 typically focuses on one area of performance and in this report the focus is on the progress made in Garda Information and Technology over the last seven years. This section highlights the influence of technologies recently deployed by the Garda Síochána on policing service delivery, as well discussing emerging challenges in this area.

Finally, Section 5 presents the conclusions.

How We Assess Performance
<p>The Authority's primary mechanism for monitoring and assessing performance is through monthly meetings with the Garda Commissioner, a minimum of four of which are held in public each year.</p> <p>The Authority's <i>Policing Strategy and Performance</i> and <i>Organisation Development</i> committees also review performance across the breadth and depth of the functions of the Garda Síochána as they relate to policing services and the management and development of the organisation.</p> <p>Staff of the Authority also engage with the Garda Síochána at national, regional, divisional and station level on an ongoing basis.</p>
<p>The Authority also assesses performance through a programme of stakeholder engagements. These include Joint Policing Committees and a wide range of groups and organisations at national and local level. This programme of engagement and outreach seeks to listen to and understand the lived experience of policing from both a service delivery and community perspective, as well as the perceptions in the community as to its effectiveness.</p>
<p>Throughout the year, the Authority also reviews and analyses internal and external reporting from, and about, the Garda Síochána, as well as monitoring wider international trends and research concerning policing, some of which is commissioned by the Authority as part of its Research Strategy.</p>

3. Performance Framework

This section provides an overview of the Policing Priorities, the Garda Síochána Strategy Statement and the annual Policing Plan, which together form the performance framework against which the Garda Síochána is strategically and operationally guided and has its performance measured.

3.1. Policing Priorities

As part of the Policing Authority statutory functions, the Policing Authority sets the **annual Policing Priorities**. These are set following an extensive public consultation, as well as consultation with the Commissioner.

These priorities are the areas of policing that the Authority wants the Garda Síochána to give the most attention to in the given period. The priorities are set for the duration of the Garda Strategy Statement, which is currently set for 2022-2024.

It was determined following consultation with the Commissioner, that in accordance with section 20(1) of the Garda Síochána Act, the current Priorities would be extended to 2025 with a number of small amendments made to reflect areas that have progressed, including a number of small changes to reflect areas that have progressed and a number of small changes to the measures of success. This decision was made mostly in light of the uncertainty in respect of a commencement date for the PSCS Act 2024 and the establishment of the PCSA. It also related to the Authority's awareness that the Garda Síochána is developing a strategy statement for the period 2025-2027, and which the Garda Síochána Act 2005 requires that in doing so, the Commissioner shall have regard, among other things, to the Policing Priorities.

The **five Policing Priorities** that have been set for this period are:

- 1) Protecting and Supporting Victims and the Vulnerable
- 2) Supporting and Ensuring Community Safety
- 3) Tackling Organised and Serious Crime
- 4) Rights Based and Ethical Service Delivery
- 5) Development of the Capacity to Strategically Manage Garda Resources.

3.2. Garda Síochána Strategy Statement

The **Garda Strategy Statement** (the Strategy) is a statutory document that establishes the Commissioner's vision for the organisation over a three-year period. It sets out medium term objectives for the Garda Síochána and strategies to achieve them. The mission and objectives within the Strategy set out a range of public commitments made by the Garda Síochána to both the community and the members of its organisation.

The Strategy is drawn up by the Commissioner, in accordance with the Garda Síochána Act 2005, and approved by the Authority with the consent of the Minister for Justice.

As with the Policing Priorities, the current Strategy will also be extended to 2025.

3.3. Policing Plan

The [annual Policing Plan](#) (the Plan) is the vehicle through which the medium term objectives contained in both the Priorities and the Strategy will be realised. Each Plan sets out specific actions, with accompanying targets and milestones, concerned with providing an effective policing service and policing organisation. These actions represent the areas of primary focus for the organisation, its management, and workforce for the year ahead and provide a lens through which performance is to be measured for that year. As with the Strategy, the Plan is drawn up by the Commissioner in accordance with the Act, and approved by the Authority with the consent of the Minister for Justice.

Since 2019, the annual Policing Plans have also addressed the actions assigned to the Garda Síochána under ‘A Policing Service for the Future’ (APSFF): an implementation plan for the recommendations arising from the Government’s [Policing Reform programme](#).

The Policing Plan 2024 is the third annual Plan that will give effect to the Strategy 2022-2024. It is structured around *five strategic pillars*:

- Community;
- Tackling Crime & Preventative Policing;
- Victims & the Vulnerable;
- Protecting the Security of the Irish State; and
- Sustainable Change & Innovation.

These pillars are supported by *five enablers*, which demonstrates the intrinsic role of the key enabling functions: People & Purpose; Partnerships; Engagement; Empowerment & Trust; and Information-Led Policing. As the work suggests, enablers are those functions and activities that need to be in place and working well in order for effective policing to be delivered. Similar to the Policing Priorities and the Strategy, the Policing Plan will also be extended to 2025.

4. Progress against the Policing Plan & Policing Priorities

4.1. Progress against the Policing Plan

This section provides an overview of performance of the Garda Síochána against the Policing Plan in the first half of 2024. It must be noted that most, if not all of the targets in the plan have a year-end focus for delivery. Therefore, a more comprehensive assessment will be provided in the full-year Assessment of Policing Performance. The Authority receives a Policing Plan Performance Report every quarter from the Garda Síochána, which sets out 18 targets and reports on their accomplishments and challenges in the previous quarter.

Figure 1: Mid-Year RAG Status Comparison 2020-2024, at mid-point of each year

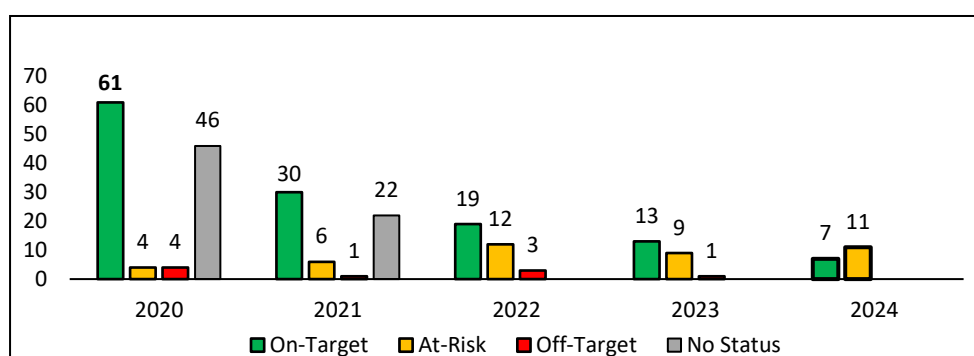


Figure 1 shows the RAG status for each target in the Policing Plan, as reported by the Garda Síochána at the mid-year point of each year. The chart shows that 11 of the 18 targets in the Policing Plan 2024 were reported as 'at-risk', with none being reported 'off-target'. Within this, a key issue causing target to be reported as 'at-risk' - whether under a pillar or enabler - was resourcing.

It was reported that seven of the targets are 'on-target', though two of these seven also report resourcing issues. As such, **resourcing constraints, as in previous years, continue to be highlighted as a barrier to achieving desired outcomes and delivering on policing plan commitments.** As in previous performance assessment reports, it is envisaged that a number of these targets will end the year as partly, or not, achieved.

The supporting functions - human resources, information and communication technology, finance and estate - continue to modernise through the Operating Model and technology upgrades. There are concerns though in relation to the lack of a fit-for-purpose information management system in the area of finance and human resources. Currently, the Garda Síochána is managing an organisation of more than 17,000 people and an annual budget of over €2 billion without such an information system, relying primarily on manually-compiled spreadsheets or paper-based systems.

While it is important for the public to see more Gardaí on the streets, it cannot be the only focus when looking at Garda resources. The organisation also needs to ensure that adequate information systems, tools, equipment, accommodation and training are in place for all members in order to provide an effective service to all they may encounter. The Information and Technology capacity and capability of the organisation has grown considerably over the lifetime of the Authority. This journey will be highlighted later in the report though it is important to stress that this journey is not complete and will continue to be an ongoing consideration and area of focus.

The uncertainty around staff terms and conditions, linked to changes set out in the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024 ('PSCS Act') has led to substantial numbers of staff leaving on the Civil Service Mobility Scheme, resulting in more frontline Gardaí returning to administrative roles and reducing street presence. Though this problem has stabilised in 2024 compared to 2023, its effect is still felt. It is hoped that the commencement of the Act will bring more stability to this issue.

4.2. Progress against the Priorities

This section provides an assessment of the Garda Síochána performance against the Policing Priorities 2022-2024.

Each of the five Priorities, the desired outcomes and how success will be measured, as developed by the Authority, are set out below.

4.2.1. Protecting and Supporting Victims and the Vulnerable

Desired Outcome:

To deliver a policing service to victims of sexual crime, domestic abuse and coercive control, that is victim centred, trauma-informed, effective in preventing and detecting these crimes, vindicates human rights, and trusted by victims.

Success will be measured by:

- ✓ Increased reporting and detection of sexual crime, domestic abuse and coercive control
- ✓ The implementation of the recommendations from the Garda Inspectorate's report on Child Sexual Abuse
- ✓ Maintenance of the organisation's response to domestic abuse to include the levels of victim engagement, victim risk assessments and engagement with partner organisations/agencies
- ✓ Increased cyber-crime capability resulting in higher detections of child sexual exploitation
- ✓ Implementation of the recommendations of the CAD/999 review process
- ✓ Consolidation of the operation of the Divisional Protective Services Units
- ✓ The rollout and review of the Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment Tool to all members

HIGH-LEVEL ASSESSMENT AGAINST THIS PRIORITY

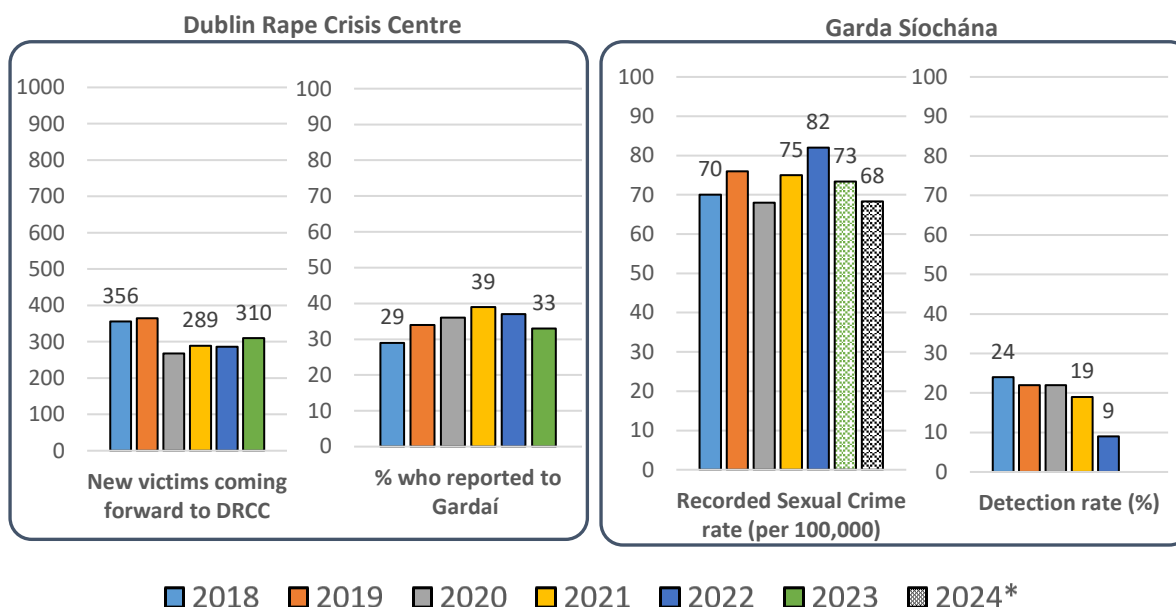
This area of work continues to be a key priority for the Garda Síochána. Policing Plan 2024 targets relating to this priority are largely reported as on target, noting some reservations with regard to resourcing and whether these targets will finish the year on target. The Authority will continue to closely monitor the targets in the second half of the year and will report accordingly in the end of year assessment of performance report.

Increased Reporting and Detection

Preliminary figures show a **drop** in the reporting of sexual offences by 13% nationally in the year to date compared with the same period of 2023, and an 8% **decrease** in reported rape and sexual assault. These crimes are known to be widely under-reported and there is concern that these crimes are still happening, but are not being reported by all victims. Comparing the available data, published by the CSO and the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre (DRCC), shown in figure 2 below, we can see that although the number of reports from victims of sexual crime to the Garda Síochána in the

Dublin Metropolitan Region (DMR) has declined since 2022, the number of disclosures from victims of sexual crime to the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre (DRCC), has not.

Figure 2: Levels of sexual crime reported to Dublin Rape Crisis Centre and the Garda Síochána in the DMR, 2018 – 2024, and detection rate for sexual crimes, measured for each year at September 2023



**2024 and 2023 (patterned boxes) calculations based on preliminary data. Detection rate 2023 not yet available.*

As can be seen in figure 2, incidents of sexual crime recorded by the Garda Síochána in the DMR (calculated as a rate per 100,000 residents) was at a peak of 82 in 2022¹. However, preliminary data suggest that the number reported in 2023 was approximately 73 per 100,000, and if the current rate of reporting continues, the number reported will be closer to 68 per 100,000 in 2024. Surveys of the proportion of victims approaching DRCC for the first time, who have reported to the Gardaí, show a decline from 37% in 2022 to 33% in 2023. Under-reporting of sexual crime is a concern for public safety, and the Authority welcomes the current Garda Síochána approach to encouraging victims to come forward, whether the incident is current or historical.

The detection figure for sexual crimes has followed a predictable pattern and remained persistently low for the past number of years. As described in a previous performance report, in general 3-4% of sexual crime cases are detected within one year, 7-12% within two years, 16-21% within 3 years, and the detection rate settles around 24% over the longer term. This pattern arises from the 12-month reporting cycle of the detection figures themselves. The Garda Síochána is aware of this, and is taking steps to address the reporting of detection figures in relation to this crime type.

¹ Of note, some of the reporting peak in 2022 was child pornography cases coming from the international/US bureau and due to an operational focus at that time. Child pornography incidents reported have dropped dramatically since (difference being 150-200 cases per year), which is small compared with sexual assault.

Implementation of the recommendations from the Garda Inspectorate's report on Child Sexual Abuse

Further progress was made in the first half of 2024 to implement these recommendations. An **electronic notification system** has been introduced between the Garda Síochána and Tusla. Notifications are given a unique identifier and tracked to ensure they are assessed and actioned appropriately. In a number of locations, the Garda Síochána has given responsibility for tracking and follow-up of Tusla referrals to a local Sergeant. Phase 2 of the notification system pilot was rolled out in Q2 of 2024. This has involved adding backdated (or 'historical') referrals to the system.

Stakeholder feedback on the system continues to be positive and it is planned to expand phase 2 nationally in Q3 2024. This is a significant development and tackles a long-standing risk, raised in the Garda Inspectorate Report on Child Sexual Abuse, that any single loss of a notification or failure to action a notification could have terrible consequences for a child.

Progress was made in **streamlining the processing and identification of Child Sexual Abuse Material**. This is not only an issue of improving the time in which material can be reviewed, but also one of Garda personnel welfare, as it can reduce the amount of such material that must be viewed. Using artificial intelligence (AI), an algorithm can search through vast numbers of emails to filter for child abuse related content, and identify emails that need further investigation. For example, while it would take the Garda Síochána approximately 10 days to go through 100,000 emails, the algorithm developed can search through 100,000 emails in one day and highlight the emails that the Garda member needs to investigate.

A speech-to-text application has been created that generates a typed document while an interview is taking place. This **application is helping to streamline the interview process** and interview durations are shorter using the application, as a Garda member does not need to transcribe the interview as it is taking place. This can improve the experience for the interviewee who does not have to wait or slow their responses to allow for the Garda member to handwrite what is being said. Further development planned for the application will provide increased functionality that will translate from different spoken languages to English text. It is hoped that this application will be introduced, at least on a pilot basis in Q4 2024 and will improve the services for victims.

Another positive development in the first half of 2024 relates to the **Barnahus project**, a multiagency response which brings all the various services required by a child victim of abuse into one child-centred location. Progress in the first half of 2024 included the appointment of regional co-ordinators to assist in moving forward the introduction of three additional Barnahus centres. The Barnahus model has the potential to be a hugely significant development in the delivery of appropriate services to child victims of sexual abuse.

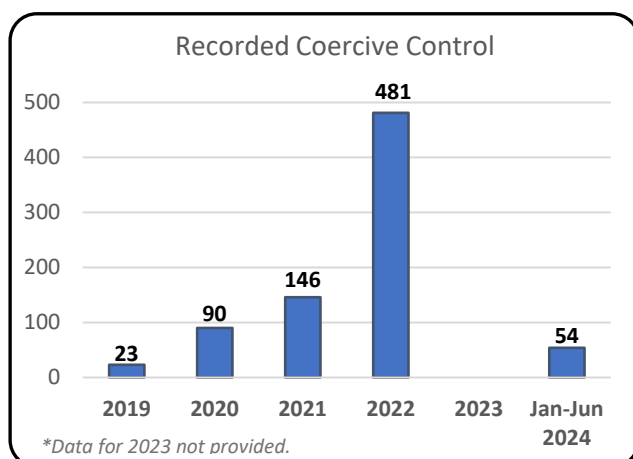
Maintenance of the organisation's approach to Domestic Abuse

When an incident is reported to the Garda Síochána that involves a suspicion of domestic abuse, there is a requirement to try to contact the victim within one week, to ascertain whether they have additional needs in relation to the incident, and to direct them towards any relevant supports available. The national average level of compliance with this **mandatory 7-day call back for victims of domestic violence has remained above 74%** throughout the first half of 2024 (up from 44.4% in the 2016-2021 period). The Authority's oversight activity has identified that the call-back rates to victims of domestic violence is at the forefront of team meetings within the Garda Síochána, with a

strong focus on improving these rates, which vary between districts. Notably, while DMR West records approximately 40% of all domestic violence incidents in the DMR, the call back rate in the Division is around 60% (which is currently the national target). In other Divisions, such as Galway, Cork, Portlaoise, Wexford and Waterford/Kilkenny the rates are well above 80%.

There can be a number of reasons that a victim cannot be contacted after an incident, for example they change their mobile number or move location without leaving a forwarding address. While the Authority welcomes the efforts made by the Garda Síochána in improving these rates, it notes the differences across Regions and Divisions, which must be addressed by the organisation.

Figure 3: Number of Coercive Control Cases reported to the Garda Síochána 2019 – Q2 2024.

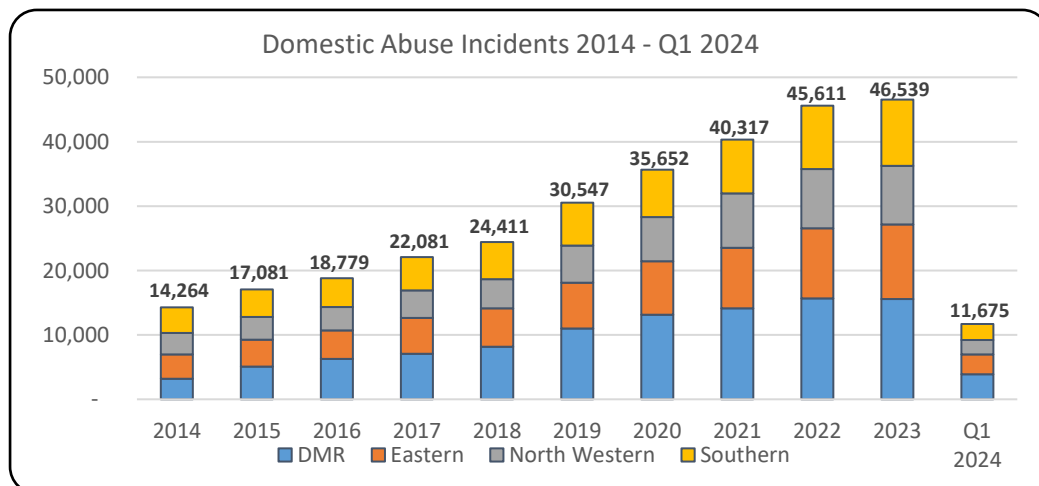


Coercive control became a criminal offence in Ireland in January 2019 under section 39 of the Domestic Violence Act 2018. As can be seen in figure 3, increasing numbers of reports of this crime type occurred in the first three years, and 481 cases were reported in 2022, following publicity and high-profile convictions in 2021. In the first half of 2024, 54 cases were reported, which is low by comparison. However, it is likely that some of those reported between 2019 and 2022 were long-standing or historical cases.

Limited information is available on levels of this crime type, as with all crimes related to domestic abuse, as domestic abuse is not a crime in and of itself, but an aggravating motive for a whole range of criminal behaviours, including coercive control, breaches of domestic (restraining) orders, assaults, sexual crimes and homicide. The method for counting crimes pre-dates the offence of coercive control, and the greater awareness of the impact domestic abuse has on society.

The Authority sees scope for the Garda Síochána to improve the counting of crimes with a domestic abuse motive, and their reporting to the public, and will continue to monitor progress in this area.

Figure 4: Domestic Violence Incidents Recorded by the Garda Síochána, 2014 – Q1 2024



**Offences counted in this analysis include: breach of Interim Barring Order; breach of Protection Order; breach of Barring Order; breach of Safety Order; domestic dispute - no offence identified; breach of Emergency Barring Order; or, any offence tagged with a motive of domestic abuse.*

In relation to **Domestic Violence Abuse (DVA) orders**, stakeholder engagement with victims' representative groups has consistently identified inconsistency in the Garda Síochána response to breaches of DVAs as an area which requires improvement. The Authority is aware that training on this has taken place, and the issue has been highlighted within the organisation's internal communications, such as the internal newsletter (NEWSBEAT). The number of arrests for breaches of orders has also featured at regular performance meetings (PAF meetings) observed by the Authority. The Authority will continue to engage with both the Garda Síochána and relevant stakeholders on this matter and will report at year end as to whether consistency has improved.

The rollout and review of the Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment Tool to all members

The **Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment Tool** is currently being reviewed in order to assess and improve the tool's format and interface, to make it more victim centred. The findings of this review will be considered in the next Authority performance report. In the interim, the Authority was advised that work has been done to improve the interface of the tool, moving towards a user-friendly electronic format, rather than paper-based.

Implementation of the recommendations of the CAD/999² review process

The majority of the recommendations arising from the review into calls to the CAD/999 system have now been implemented. However, the Authority is aware through its oversight activities **that the issue of 'overcorrection' still exists** in some Divisions. This relates to calls that - in the view of some Gardai - should appropriately be cancelled, but are not being cancelled within the control centres. The view has been expressed that this is due to an overly cautious approach being taken in control rooms following the review. This has an **impact on resources** and has been raised with the Garda Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner on a number of occasions. It highlights the importance of a consistent approach to training and supervision on this matter, both at organisational level and within the control centres. It is an area the Authority will continue to monitor.

Consolidation of the operation of the Divisional Protective Services Units (DPSUs)

In 2023 a review of the impact of DPSUs was undertaken, and a draft report is under consideration by the Garda National Protective Services Bureau (GNPSB). DPSUs have been a hugely significant development in the provision of a policing service to victims of sexual crime. The review is important to assess the demand, resourcing and training needs of the units and the Authority awaits its receipt and would hope to factor the findings and recommendations into its next performance report.

² Arising from the closure (including cancellation) of Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) 999 calls made by the public to the Garda Síochána, the Authority engaged former Chief Inspector of Constabulary for Police Scotland, Mr Derek Penman, to carry out an examination of An Garda Síochána's review of the closure of the incidents. The reports, which are available on www.PolicingAuthority.ie, highlighted a total of 36 key findings and made 16 recommendations to An Garda Síochána and the Policing Authority to drive improvements in call handling and mitigate risk.

4.2.2.Supporting and Ensuring Community Safety

Desired Outcome:

To understand and respond to anti-social behaviour, crime, and associated quality of life issues for communities. To address these in conjunction with its partners in a way that prevents crime, reduces fear, and results in a better quality of life for communities.

Success will be measured by:

- ✓ Rollout of the Community Policing Framework, including a review of its effectiveness and impact
- ✓ Policing with communities builds on the learning and retains the approach and tone of contact achieved during the COVID-19 period
- ✓ Fear of crime being lower with increased confidence in the policing response to crime
- ✓ Strengthened interagency working at strategic national level and at local level as reported through the Authority's stakeholder engagement with NGOs, community groups, and statutory bodies
- ✓ Positive engagement in the establishment and commencement of activity of the Community Safety Partnerships
- ✓ Implementation of the Garda Reserve Strategy
- ✓ Continued rollout of the Divisional Diversity Forums and facilitating of the National Diversity Forum.
- ✓ Increased reporting and detection of hate crimes
- ✓ Improve road safety in conjunction with partners through the provision of new technologies, public awareness and education, and increased information sharing
- ✓ Demonstration of a strategic and operational approach to roads policing activity, including enforcement, that is evidence-based, consistent, and responds to local and national trends

HIGH-LEVEL ASSESSMENT AGAINST THIS PRIORITY

Progress against this Priority is reported by the Garda Síochána as on target and set to be achieved. While not listed above as a success measure, this priority also includes roads policing, and therefore will also be addressed below.

Rollout of the Community Policing Framework, including a review of its effectiveness and impact

The Garda Síochána has paused the rollout of the Framework and is carrying out a review to ascertain its effectiveness. It is unclear at the moment whether the review has commenced, and what are the timelines for its completion and for implementing the resulting recommendations.

The first six months of the year saw a number of **Community Engagement Hubs** come into operation as part of the Garda Operating Model. Feedback around the country from Gardaí has been positive in the main. The impact of this work on communities' sense of Garda visibility and engagement will become more apparent as the Garda Public Attitudes Survey begins to produce results at divisional level. In the past, the Authority has highlighted that community policing was often the first to lose members when Gardaí are needed to undertake tasks elsewhere. Over the past number of months, the Authority has heard that in many areas community policing units are being bolstered with additional Gardaí. This has been done in recognition of the important role Community Policing can play in working with communities. This has been particularly relevant during this period with the introduction of accommodation centres for International Protection Applicants in a number of communities.

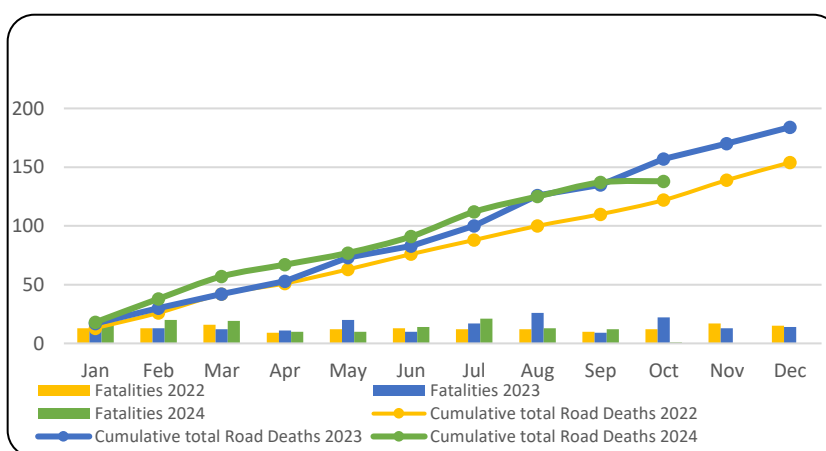
Policing with Communities

A key measure of success in relation to this priority is the continued rollout of the **Divisional Diversity Forums** and facilitation of the **National Diversity Forum**. Local forums are reported to be working well. In contrast, the Authority is aware that no progress has been made in relation to the resumption of the National Forum and although a draft Terms of Reference has been produced, the parties involved were not successful in progressing it further in the first half of 2024. The Forum was envisaged as an important vehicle by which issues of policing and diversity could be discussed. However, the Authority is hopeful that the introduction of the new Community Safety Partnership will allow for better coordination and cooperation between the Garda Síochána and diverse communities.

Gardaí have continued to work with the Health Service Executive (HSE) to identify drug trends of concern at festivals as part of the 'Back of House' pilot programme, as well as new and emerging synthetic opioids. The Authority has engaged on this matter with Garda management through its Strategy and Policing Performance Committee and was also reassured to note that such trends are addressed at Garda Síochána management meetings in a fairly consistent manner.

Roads Policing

Figure 5: Road Fatalities, by month, 2022-2024



Source: [EU report on road deaths, 2023](#)

Road deaths have increased by 31% from 2019 to 2023 and to the end of June 2024 there were 91 traffic fatalities – an increase of almost 10% year on year. It should be noted that Ireland's figures are still below the EU average of 46 road deaths per million inhabitants with a rate of 35 in 2023.

Comparison of the available data shows no correlation between the overall population size, the volume of traffic on the roads and the number of roads fatalities over the past 18 years³.

As part of the efforts to make the roads safer, the Garda Commissioner introduced a new initiative in April 2024 whereby all uniformed members are to carry out **30 minutes of high-visibility roads policing per shift**. The implementation of this initiative is closely monitored locally at performance meetings within divisions. There are a variety of roads policing activities that can and are being

³ Comparison conducted by the Executive based on CSO publicly available data.

undertaken by Gardaí within the 30 minutes. The number of lifesaver offences and lifesaver detections (for example, use of seatbelts and mobile phones) has increased by 12% across the country, despite a smaller increase in the number of Mandatory Intoxicant (MIT) checkpoints. The full impact of these additional 30 minutes will be examined at year end, with the availability of more information and statistics.

The **Garda Mobility Device** is continuing to be an important tool in roads policing. With continual upgrades and addition of apps it is streamlining processes for the Garda Síochána. One of the most recent apps to be added to the devices is the ability to find up-to-date insurance details for cars while out on the road. This has led to a **74% increase in the number of vehicles seized** in the first half of 2024 compared to the same period in 2023. The Garda **'Bike Safe Program'**, initiated and delivered by the Roads Policing Unit is providing training to motorbike users on safe riding. It is oversubscribed, and the Garda Síochána hopes to roll out the programme to more areas.

Amendments to the Road Safety Act 2010 in May mean that Garda members at the scene of any road traffic collision where injuries are alleged or suspected to have occurred, must test the drivers of all vehicles involved for the presence of both alcohol and drugs. In addition, a provision was inserted in Section 10 to allow a Garda member, testing a driver for the presence of drugs, to require the driver to remain at the checkpoint for up to 30 minutes to perform testing. This closes a legal loophole, highlighted in December, that no explicit power to detain a motorist for the result of a roadside drug test was available. The impact of these amendments will be examined at year end, as figures on the amount of tests for alcohol and drugs at scenes of road traffic collisions become available.

While the enforcement activity carried out by the Garda Síochána is an important deterrent to road offences and an important tool in removing persistent and recidivist offenders from the roads, it is important to note that it is not the only agency with responsibility for road safety. The Garda Síochána took part in multi-agency engagement to tackle the rise in road deaths in the first half of 2024. It is positive that the Garda Síochána continues to engage in Road Safety Authority (RSA) road safety campaigns, in addition to running their own programmes with direct community engagement, such as the **Bike Safe** programme and **Operation Nexus** with rally enthusiasts.

Public Order

The number of demonstrations and protests throughout the country has increased significantly in recent years, especially in the Dublin Metropolitan Region. There were approximately 1,114 demonstrations between June 2022 and May 2023, compared to 636 protests in the preceding 12 months. There was a 56% increase in demonstrations from August 2023 to August 2024⁴. Caution must be taken when comparing these figures as they were produced using different methodologies and are based on particular points in time. However, the figures do indicate a consistent trend of an increase in protests year on year. Although protests vary in terms of their policing requirements, and the number of protests is not necessarily indicative of policing demand, it has been acknowledged that significant resources were deployed during this time to police these events.

A **review of public order policing** was undertaken by the Authority during 2024, in response to a request by the Minister for Justice following the events of 23 November 2023 in Dublin city. This

⁴ MTA, August 2024

piece of work was not a review of the policing of the specific events on 23 November, but rather a review of the state of public order policing in the Garda Síochána generally. The approach to the review saw considerable engagement with public order Gardaí around the country, the National Garda Síochána Public Order Steering Group, Senior Leadership within the Garda Síochána, the Garda Training College, Garda Associations and Staff Unions. It also involved engagement with a range of other stakeholder organisations, including some from other jurisdictions. The review also examined material received from the Garda Síochána and included a jurisdictional analysis of reviews and reports conducted following significant public order events abroad.

This review found that while significant progress has been made since the publication of the Garda Síochána Inspectorate Report “Public Order Policing” in 2019, **some of its key recommendations remain incomplete**. These issues do not relate to the commitment, dedication and bravery of public order Garda members, which has been strongly evident during this review and others, but rather relate to improvements needed in the central co-ordination, management and governance of public order policing. The review found that eleven key themes emerged and some areas deserving of emphasis are central co-ordination, management and governance issues, resourcing of public order policing, use of force, equipment and training, and staff welfare. The report was submitted to the Minister for Justice and shared with the Garda Síochána on 2 August 2024 and it was discussed at the Authority’s public meeting with the Garda Commissioner and the Senior Leadership Team in September 2024.

As outlined at that meeting **considerable progress was made in the first half of 2024** in terms of investment in public order equipment and training. However as also outlined at the meeting, revised key policies governing public order policing are yet to be finalised and published and until such time as they are, key recommendations dating back to 2019 remain to be implemented.

4.2.3. Tackling Organised and Serious Crime

Desired Outcome:

To prevent and disrupt the activities of organised criminals, including those of international networks engaged in national and transnational crime and reduce their impact on communities.

Success will be measured by:

- ✓ Organised Crime being disrupted as evidenced by preservation of life, seizures of weapons, drugs and assets and successful convictions
- ✓ At community level, attempts by organised criminals to engage young people in criminality and drugs intimidation being increasingly disrupted
- ✓ Increased capacity to prevent and respond to cyber-crime including a reduction of the backlog of seized ICT devices leading to increased detections and convictions
- ✓ Increased capacity to prevent and respond to corruption, fraud, and other economic crime types

HIGH-LEVEL ASSESSMENT AGAINST THIS PRIORITY

Policing Plan 2024 targets relating to this priority are reported as being **at risk** with respect to resourcing. Despite this, one of the two targets is on target in terms of overall assessment.

Organised Crime

There was continued success in the Garda Síochána's response to organised crime with major international and national groups, networks and routes operating in Ireland being disrupted. This is seen in particular in the metrics regarding seizures on the part of the Garda Síochána, as well as Revenue and the Criminal Assets Bureau (CAB). **Significant seizures around the country** resulted in an estimated €25 million-worth of drugs being seized. The sizeable seizures within the Irish market highlight the prevalence of these drugs within communities, but is also indicative of Ireland as a 'landing zone' for onward transport of drugs to Europe

The Garda Síochána reported a number of **cross-border operational successes** in the first 6 months of 2024 and there is a continued focus on tackling Mobile Organised Crime Gangs, who are crossing borders to commit crime, with dedicated days of action. It was further reported that **an increase in the seizure of assets derived from criminal activity** was achieved due to the relationships that have been established between the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau (GNECB), CAB, PSNI, His Majesty's Revenue and Customs and the National Crime Agency in the UK. This is a welcome development noted by the Authority.

Drugs and drug-related crime

This is consistently a concern for communities throughout Ireland regardless of geographic location, socio-economic background or other factors. This includes the prevalence of drug-related intimidation (DRI) and the grooming of children and young people into crime. The Garda Síochána and community groups have spoken to the significant challenges and impacts of DRI and the grooming of young people across the country, where organised criminals engage young people in criminality and DRI. The Authority is conscious that tackling DRI is not a matter of policing alone, however it is still concerned by the prevalence of this phenomenon in our society. The **DRIVE project** is enabling the gathering of data on the prevalence of intimidation, but more progress is needed in working with communities and families to build trust and confidence to report safely.

Young People

The Authority has emphasised over the past number of years the requirement for the Garda Síochána to develop a strategic approach to its engagement with children and young people, as a key cohort within the communities they serve. There is a **commitment in 2024 to the development of a Young Persons' Plan** that aims to bring together all the various initiatives and programmes within the Garda Síochána that involve young people. Gardaí engage with children and young people as suspects, offenders, witnesses and victims of crime, and while policy exists to inform each of these categories of children, the Authority considers that the Garda Síochána Young Persons' Plan is an opportunity to articulate its approach to dealing with children, regardless of the nature of the encounter.

The Authority has been told by Garda management that work on the Young Persons' Plan has been undertaken in the first half of 2024 and that it is on target and expected **to be delivered by year end**. The Authority looks forward to having sight of the plan, and hopes the consultation phase of its preparation is comprehensive and includes young people from all parts of society, other relevant agencies as well drawing on the organisation's own experience of engaging with young people in a variety of ways and settings. It will hopefully also draw on the outcomes of research and oversight activity that has highlighted areas in which relationships with young people are challenged.

Increased capacity to prevent and respond to cyber crime

The increases in resourcing in recent years at the Garda National Cyber Crime Bureau (GNCCB) have had a significant impact on the caseload of devices being examined or awaiting examination by the Garda Síochána - falling to a **four-year low** of 217 in March 2024. This has meant quicker processing of cases, aiding investigation times, and has given the Bureau the ability to support a wider range of investigations. It has also enabled the presence of **'digital first responders'** on searches to ensure the appropriate seizure of devices and other digital evidence. These additional resources will allow the Bureau to provide more consistent support across other technical examinations of mobile phones and CCTV footage. It is the reality that **digital evidence and/or multiple devices is part of nearly every crime investigation** and as such developing this capacity is of importance for the organisation as a whole.

While it is important to note that the number of child sexual abuse material investigations have not decreased, this greater capacity has also allowed for a reduction in the percentage of such cases individual investigators face on a regular basis. This is an important step in maintaining the health and wellness of the staff and members who work within the Bureau.

Despite this, **significant challenges for the Bureau remain** in respect of resourcing, particularly around the recruitment of qualified forensic examiners in a competitive, full-employment economy. The tools, technology and relevant licences must be monitored to ensure that the organisation continues to be able to respond effectively in a digital environment that becomes increasingly complex. For victims, this work can largely go unnoticed as the capacity challenges facing the DPSUs, the Courts Service and other facets of the judicial process lengthen case times, and many victims still face lengthy waits for outcomes from their cases, leading to frustration and unwillingness to engage with the process.

Capacity to prevent and respond to corruption, fraud, and other economic crime types

There has been **little progress to report** in 2024 in respect of enhancing the capacity of the organisation to respond to economic crime trends and the implementation of Hamilton Report recommendations⁵. The Authority was glad to receive the resourcing plan for the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau (GNECB) in Q2 2024. However, it notes that this plan is three years overdue and while it outlines the numbers of Garda staff and members needed to effectively resource the Bureau, it **fails to address the estate, IT and training needs** associated with such personnel increases, or indeed the current and emerging trends of economic crime. Furthermore, despite the plan being in place, **no meaningful resource increase** has been seen and resourcing remains the biggest barrier to the Bureau's effective operation, particularly within independent units that rely on the Bureau for resourcing, such as the Financial Intelligence Unit.

⁵ The Hamilton Review Group Report (HRG Report) and subsequent Department of Justice Implementation Plan contain a recommendation that the Garda Síochána develops a long term strategic plan (resourcing plan) to ensure that adequate resources are available to the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau.

As will be highlighted later in the report, each of the resourcing issues which arise in the various bureaux and units cannot be considered in isolation but need to be considered as part of overall workforce planning within the Garda Síochána.

4.2.4. Rights Based and Ethical Service Delivery

Desired Outcome:

To deliver a policing service in a manner that ensures that all those who come into contact with the Garda Síochána are dealt with in a way that: understands, respects and embodies diversity; vindicates and protects their human rights; is consistent with the Code of Ethics; and, is centred on the Garda Decision Making Model.

Success will be measured by:

- ✓ The embedding of human rights, the Code of Ethics and the Decision Making Model in all strategic planning and service delivery functions
- ✓ The degree to which the public believes that the Garda Síochána would treat both themselves and all members of the Community fairly
- ✓ The successful rollout of, including training of all members in the use of, the Decision Making Model
- ✓ All policies existing and new are human rights proofed, to include any policy relating to regarding the use of new technologies for policing
- ✓ The routine publication by the Garda Síochána of progressively more data and information, e.g. on its use of force and its use of any exceptional powers.
- ✓ The development of the organisational capacity and systems to publish, interrogate and respond to data and information that demonstrates the degree to which policing is fair, impartial, and non-discriminatory
- ✓ Increased diversity within the Garda Síochána workforce
- ✓ Positive improvement in the lived experience of policing within communities
- ✓ Development of the anti-corruption unit and implementation of an intoxicant testing regime and an internal vetting process
- ✓ Culture Audit outcomes demonstrate positive cultural change

HIGH-LEVEL ASSESSMENT AGAINST THIS PRIORITY

Policing Plan 2024 targets relating to this priority, including the initiatives mentioned, are reported as on target at the end of Q2. However, the Authority remains of the view that this work is still insufficiently linked to day-to-day work and the culture within the organisation.

Conduct and Discipline

The Authority continued its oversight focus in 2024 on matters related to discipline and Garda integrity and has engaged with the Garda Commissioner on this topic in public and private.

The legislative process of drafting the Garda Síochána (Conduct) Regulations 2024, the Garda Síochána (Standards of Professional Behaviour) Regulations 2024 and the Garda Síochána Performance Regulations 2024 by the Department of Justice is ongoing. Of note, the **commencement of the new Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024** will not be possible until such time that the Garda Síochána (Conduct) Regulations are in place. The Authority was informed that in the main, the Garda Síochána is satisfied with the new regulations and that these are now with the Garda representative associations for their comments. The Authority and the

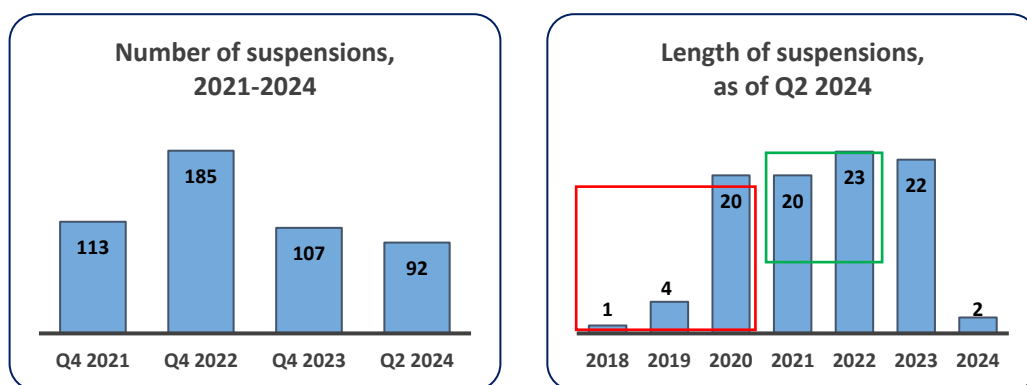
Garda Síochána are hopeful that the introduction of the new regulations will bring improvements to the current disciplinary process.

A key measure of success in relation to this priority is the implementation of an **intoxicant testing regime** and indeed the Authority welcomes the progress made in this area, in particular the introduction of drug-testing for applicants at the Garda College. However, the Authority is concerned that little progress has been made in the first half of 2024 in relation to the introduction of **in-career vetting**. While the Authority is aware of the dependency on the legislation, as noted above, it is of the view that given the importance of in-career vetting and its potential to protect the vulnerable, more progress could, and should, have been made.

The Authority welcomes the publication of data on **suspensions** in terms of numbers and categories of behaviour by the Garda Síochána. The Authority would also encourage the organisation to include summary figures on the outcomes of these suspensions.

The Authority notes the decrease in the number of Garda suspensions. However, it remains concerned at the lengthy nature of some of these suspensions (for example, 25 suspensions have been ongoing for 4-6 years and 43 for 2-3 years), as this is a matter that impacts Garda resources, members' and staff wellbeing and morale and public confidence in the police service. While the Authority is aware that in some cases this is outside the control of the Garda Síochána, it is important to note that in Q2 2024 there were 87 cases within the GS discipline section that were between 3 and 4 years old.

Figure 7: Number of suspensions of Garda personnel 2021 – 2024 and length of suspension by year in which active suspensions began



Red box indicates number of suspensions ongoing for 4-6 years, green box indicates suspensions ongoing for 2-3 years.

It is reported that progress is being made to support the **health and wellbeing of Garda personnel** with the second cohort of Garda Síochána Mental Health First Aid Training being completed by 980 people across the organisation. It is further reported that work is continuing on the development of the next Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The Authority welcomes these developments.

The Authority also heard from Gardaí around the country that there is a level of awareness and engagement with the **Garda Peer-to-Peer support programme** and the employee supports available by phone. What has also emerged is a desire for increased personal engagement by local senior management in the wake of significant events, such as public order events or in instances where Gardaí are being trolled on social media.

The introduction of **Body Worn Cameras (BWC)**, and the rollout of phase 1 of the Proof of Concept (POC) launched on 31 May. The POC is currently live in 5 stations across 3 Divisions, with 600 members trained: Limerick (200), Kevin Street (50), Pearse Street (50), Store Street (50) and Waterford (200). There has been positive feedback from members with experience using the cameras. The first conviction with the aid of BWC has recently been reported. The Garda Síochána is planning to continue with the roll out to the whole country in 2025, however there may be delays in the introduction of a **Digital Evidence Management System (DEMS)** due to the need for legislation which will affect the rollout. A DEMS is essential in order to facilitate the Garda Síochána to effectively store, process and use the evidential material recorded. The Authority noted previously the importance of an **overarching policy** to guide the use of various novel technologies within the Garda Síochána, to include BWCs, so as to ensure its fair and impartial usage. As such, the Authority is looking forward to seeing progress in this area following the conclusion of the POC phase. Further discussion on this area is provided in Section 4 below.

4.2.5. Development of the Capacity to Strategically Manage Garda Resources

Desired Outcome:

To ensure that resources – finance, ICT and capital assets – are appropriately and strategically managed and deployed to support Garda members, Garda Staff and Garda Reserves.

To ensure that this workforce is appropriately trained, skilled, managed and supported to provide a service that responds to the crime environment and needs of the public.

Success will be measured by:

- ✓ Strategic workforce plan agreed by the leadership team and being implemented
- ✓ Operating Model being rolled out and functioning consistently and effectively across the country
- ✓ Increased financial capacity that allows for detailed financial management information and analysis to assist decision making
- ✓ A comprehensive estate strategy agreed by the leadership team and being implemented in conjunction with statutory partners
- ✓ Performance management system in place for every member of the workforce with evidence of active engagement
- ✓ Comprehensive training strategy in place and implemented with the necessary structures for delivery
- ✓ Governance reporting gives confidence that processes and policies are uniformly implemented across the organisation

HIGH-LEVEL ASSESSMENT AGAINST THIS PRIORITY

Resources are at the heart of this priority and resourcing remains a significant and impactful challenge to the Garda Síochána. Policing Plan 2024 targets relating to this priority are largely reported to be **at-risk** at the end of Q2 2024.

Roll out of Operating Model

At the end of June 2024, **14 of the 21 Garda divisions had fully implemented** the Operating Model structure. The implementation of the Operating Model in two thirds of Garda divisions is an important milestone. Indeed, the Authority retains the view that the implementation of the Model as envisaged (and if provided with the necessary resourcing) will enhance the ability of the Garda

Síochána to provide an efficient, modern and fit-for-purpose policing service. However, it was reported to the Authority that the implementation of the Model in the remaining 5 divisions will be challenging, due to staffing and accommodation issues, and it is unlikely that all 21 divisions will have the Model implemented by year end. It was further reported to the Authority by Garda members in Operating Model divisions that it is difficult to achieve the Model's full advantages and potential in the current state of resources shortage, to include staff, facilities and accommodation.

Garda Numbers, recruitment and retention

At present, the main **challenge continues to be the ability to recruit and retain members and staff** in the numbers necessary and at the pace required to grow the organisation. As of 30 June 2024, the Garda member strength stood at 14,100 and the Garda staff strength stood at 3,574. These numbers are still below the pre-COVID-19 level.

The Authority is aware that the current rate of intake of trainees to the Garda College is likely to be mostly off-set through resignations and retirements⁶ in the coming years. To overcome this anticipated drop in membership and expand its numbers in line with Government desire to invest in more Gardaí, the Garda Síochána needs to recruit and train significantly more new members every year over the next decade. In the first half of 2024, 127 members were attested, and two intakes (totalling 292 trainees) entered the Garda College, with two more intakes scheduled for Q3 and Q4. Recruitment campaigns in 2022, 2023 and 2024 have so far resulted in almost 1,200 trainees entering the Garda College, and the selection and vetting processes from the most recent campaigns remain ongoing.

In this context, the Authority welcomes the development of a **Recruitment and Retention Strategy** and the introduction of **exit interviews**, to understand the motivations of those leaving the service, as well as the 66% increase in the Garda training allowance, the increase in the upper age of entry for Garda members from 35 to 50 and the recently-announced extension of the compulsory retirement age from 60 to 62. However, the Authority is concerned that it is unlikely that the organisation will reach the approved level of 15,000 Garda members set in 2016. The original target was to achieve this by the end of 2021, before the closure of the Garda College during COVID-19. Furthermore, recently, the Garda Commissioner reported to an Oireachtas committee, that 15,000 members would not be enough to meet all the demands being made on the organisation.

The number of Garda members out on **long term sick leave** is also having an impact on available resources, with one division reporting currently having 23% of its members out on long-term sick leave (defined as 28 days or more). There has been a focus in many divisions to try and bring Garda Síochána members and staff on long term sick leave back to work, often performing light duties. The importance of maintaining communication with members and staff who are out on leave has been mentioned in many divisions visited by the Authority. It has been reported that the numbers waiting for appointments with the Garda Chief Medical Officer (CMO) is high, with frustration within the divisions that must wait for those appointments to determine if a particular Garda member or staff can return to work. The Authority has heard of inconsistencies, in particular in relation to cases where the opinion of member's/staff's local GP is different to the opinion of the CMO and it is

⁶ Expected retirement numbers are predicted to 'fall off a cliff' within the next 5 years, due to mandatory retirement, combined with accelerated recruitment in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

unclear from a policy perspective who ultimately determines whether the person is ready to return to work.

For these reasons it is vital for the organisation that the **Recruitment & Retention Strategy, the Strategic Workforce Plan, and the Training Strategy** are finalised in the very near future, in addition to the introduction of a fit-for-purpose Human Resources Information System (HRIS), to allow the organisation to better oversee and manage their personnel resources and plan for the future.

Finance

Although budget 2024 provided the highest ever allocation to the Garda Síochána — over €2.35bn, a 25% increase since 2020 - **resources continue to be a barrier** to achieving many goals within the organisation. It was reported to the Authority that many divisions spend their entire salary budget by the Garda members' 9th shift rotation and need to apply for a supplementary budget. The organisation is on course to exceed €200m in overtime in 2024, against an overtime budget allocation of €132m.

It was reported that the expenditure on overtime in June was €18.18 million and overall, pay and overtime is over the profiled budget by €29.2 million by the end of June.

The Joint Working Group on Garda Resources was informed that the top 5 categories of overtime for 2023 account for 74% of overtime spend. These key drivers are: Protection and Security (20%), which includes ministerial security; Crime investigation (19%); Courts (13%); Fixed Hours (12%); Crime prevention; and Public Order (10%).

Other non-core duties driving overtime include immigration duties, prisoner detainee escorts, secondments to other departments (Social Protection, Tusla, Prison Inspectorate etc.) and overtime driven by reform, such as BWC POC, IMS, Security and Community Safety Bill and Garda Powers Bill.

Performance Management

The Civil Service Performance Management System (ePMDS) is being introduced for Garda staff, and this is a welcome step. However, concerns remain in relation to **the lack of an effective performance management system** for Garda members that takes into consideration the members' career and personal development, and that allows a constructive discussion with their direct supervisor on performance of their role. The Authority has heard in the past and indeed in recent engagement across the divisions that the current Performance, Accountability and Learning Framework (PALF) is not an effective performance management tool and in essence is a goal setting tool. The Authority believes that optimally a single performance management for Garda members and Garda staff would better reflect the reality of the organisation where Garda members can be reporting to Garda staff and vice versa.

In addition, the Authority heard that the shortage of experienced sergeants to mentor young members on the beat, as well as in an office environment and in terms of professional conduct, is having a negative impact on the day-to-day supervision. It has been reported to the Authority that while the number of sergeants to Gardaí within the organisation appears quite high on paper and has increased on previous years, there remains an issue around **lack of high-quality and meaningful supervision on the frontline**.

In conclusion, while on one hand it may seem positive that no targets are reported as being off target, concern remains for the Authority that this is, in part, due to a reluctance within the Garda Síochána to mark targets as red. This is particularly highlighted by the reluctance around marking resourcing as red when it is clear to all, including within the Garda Síochána itself, that staffing remains one of the biggest barriers to the work of the organisation.

5. Spotlight on Data & Technology

5.1. Where it started

When the public is asked what it needs to keep its community safe, the response typically is more Garda visibility and more Gardaí on the streets. The Authority believes **investment in technology** – in terms of skilled individuals, equipment and systems with multi-annual support to continuously upgrade and maintain those systems – is also **important in ensuring an effective policing response** and service, which contributes significantly to the safety of communities. Sustained investment and development is critical to avoid a situation where the Garda Síochána is undertaking analogue policing in a digital world.

In 2016 it is perhaps fair to say that Information and Communications Technology was considered a back room function. The organisation suffered from a legacy of little investment in ICT, beyond managing existing systems.

The following are a **small number of examples** of the outcomes of the underinvestment that existed in 2016:

- There was **no system to capture where Gardaí** were and what they were doing on a daily basis, with most of the processes being **paper-based**. In 2017 the organisation undertook a census of its workforce and this was undertaken using paper and excel sheets as there was no HR system that would provide Garda management with this information.
- The **main form of communication** that Garda members had while out on the beat or in the car was the TETRA radio. If Garda members needed information on a person or a case, they had to radio the station and another member of personnel would have to manually look up the information requested and then radio back – or they had to drive back to the station themselves to look up the information on PULSE.
- In terms of roads policing, **Fixed Charge Notices** that were given to members of the public were listed in a book that was sent to Tipperary for processing and fines would then be posted.
- **Investigations** were managed using a JOBS book which was a large leather bound book relating to each investigation, which listed the jobs to be completed in an investigation and by whom.
- PULSE was basic - the recording of incidents did not capture much of what is now routinely captured including the motive for a crime, the degree of victim engagement or the relationship between a victim and perpetrator in the case of sexual crime.
- The crime statistics provided to the Central Statistics Office (CSO) was published under the banner of “**under reservation**”, as the CSO could not stand over the quality of the data recorded.
- Systems that did exist within the organisation were **standalone**, and there was no way to connect them to share or transfer information. For example, the 999 Computer Aided Dispatch system did not automatically populate all the details of a call to PULSE.

5.2. Progressing from siloed ICT systems to a Data & Technology vision and infrastructure

It is difficult to overstate the progress made within the Garda Síochána organisation in the area of what was referred to as ICT, since 2016. A key element of that progress has been the development

of a Data and Technology vision and plan which places the delivery of effective information led policing at its core. A second element has been a realisation of the strategic importance of data and technology to the delivery of a policing service. The narrative within the organisation is no longer about 'ICT' and it is no longer about it being a backroom function. It is now about the intersection between good quality data and available technology that enables information to be provided in a timely fashion where it is needed, to support Gardaí in keeping people safe.

The resourcing of the strategic and operational leadership of the Information and Technology function through the appointment of an Executive Director, Chief Information Officer in 2019 and the recruitment of other key senior professional roles was critical in enabling the progress that has been made. The development of a Data & Technology Vision and the increased centrality of key technology personnel in the planning and governance of the organisation has yielded substantial results.

Since 2020, it is evident that Information and Technology became a focus within the organisation and a number of successful projects emerged, including:

- A Roster and Duty Management System (RDMS),
- An Investigation Management System (IMS),
- GardaSAFE (the 999 call system)
- Mobility Devices for all Gardaí with Apps including, Person Search App, Fixed Charge Notice (FCN) App, PULSE App, Insurance App, GardaSAFE, Crime Dashboard and Body Worn Cameras.
- Infrastructure and digital architecture to support these systems.

Much of the work done has been in creating the infrastructure to support the development of systems. There has also been success in adopting particular methodologies in the development of technological solutions to policing problems. This have included putting the user at the centre of the development.

The developments were driven by the needs of the organisation and policing need. The solutions developed allow the organisation to:

- Know where members are deployed and what are they doing;
- Ensure that in responding to 999 calls, dispatchers know where the nearest Garda car or unit is located;
- Give frontline Gardaí fast access to the information they need to do their job and keep them as safe as possible when they are responding to a crime - including exact location of the incident, whether there have been previous incidents at the location to which they are being deployed, whether there are licensed firearms at the address and information regarding occupants at the address, if it exists on PULSE;
- Ensure, through GardaSAFE that every call received on 999 goes onto PULSE, that the information on PULSE is accurate and categorised correctly so that an appropriate policing response can be provided;
- Ensure through the Investigation Management System that there is consistency in how investigations are carried out and that each incident is responded to appropriately, and in a timely fashion;

- Provide timely data and information to Garda management within each division as to the level, types and locations of crime within their division so that they can effectively deploy resources

Managing Change

The introduction of a number of new systems within a short number of years has involved significant change to work practices and has involved significant investment in training. Technological change is hard and more so when it is happening at the same time as significant structural change within the organisation, as with the concurrent introduction of the Operating Model. Garda members have had to respond to a number of new systems at the same time and all while doing the day job. This has led to frustration and **change fatigue** within the organisation. The organisation's achievement in rolling out a significant number of systems within a short period of time is a tribute to the engagement of the 'regular' Gardaí with this process and the significant professional support to them from the data and technology staff members.

A small number of the new systems that the Authority feels have helped to contribute towards better policing outcomes for the public are briefly set out below.

Investigation Management System (IMS)

Ensuring consistency in investigations is imperative in ensuring consistency in the policing service provided. As a result of the recommendations coming from the Homicide Review published in 2019, the Garda Síochána developed an Investigation Management System (IMS). When a Garda inputs a type of incident – a theft from shop, an assault, a sudden death – the system generates a list of the various investigative tasks that must be undertaken to investigate that type of incident. The Garda then uses the IMS to manage his or her investigation - inputting details as each task is complete, uploading statements etc. The system allows the sergeant or other supervisors to check on the progress of any investigation at any time.

IMS was rolled out in Waterford in Q1 2019. The system has seen 22 changes made to it in response to user feedback. As a result, a refined version (IMS 2.0) was developed and is currently being rolled out. This updated version reduces the number of mandatory tasks in investigations of certain crime types (for example, summary offences) and gives more functionality which allows cases to be moved to other members of the team by the sergeant, if needed. It is planned to make the IMS system available on mobility devices so that Gardaí can update investigations while out of the station.

Impact on the service to the public

Systems such as IMS, can improve the service the public receives from the Garda Síochána. The system means that it is hard to envisage how an incident reported by a member of the public, once on the system, would not be attended to and be investigated appropriately. IMS not only ensures that each crime is investigated in a consistent way across the country, it also ensures that Garda members progress cases, as the system will flag to the Garda and his or her supervisor if action is required. For new Gardaí, Supervisors have spoken about how useful the system is in setting out the tasks to be completed across a range of crime types. They have also spoken about the benefits in terms of supervision and their awareness of the workload assigned to each Garda.

The system has the potential to reduce the amount of complaints to GSOC regarding 'neglect of duty', where an initial investigation is started but not progressed for an extended amount of time. In 2023, neglect of duty accounted for 33% of complaint allegations received.

The IMS has received significant media attention as it is the system most typically referenced in relation to Gardaí being *‘tied to the desk rather than being out and about.’*

in engagement with those divisions that were early adopters of the IMS, the feedback has been that although the roll out was arduous, they would ‘not be without it’ in terms of the benefits the new system has brought to the quality of investigations and their supervision.

Garda Mobility Devices

The roll out of the mobility device to Gardaí has been hugely significant. These are essentially encrypted phones populated with policing relevant apps that allow Gardaí to undertake their work away from the station and to access relevant information and guidance in a timely fashion. With the device, any Garda member can clock in and out to work, access the PULSE system and the Garda Portal, which contains key information and guidance for members. There is also a community framework toolkit that can be used while out in schools and while educating members of the public. The devices have become invaluable to members performing **Roads Policing** as they can perform a number of tasks at the side of the road that was previously simply not possible. They can use the Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) software to check the details of a vehicle, give a Fixed Charge Notice to a driver that is breaking the law, check if a car’s licensing details, tax and insurance are up to date, and access the PULSE system to see if a driver has outstanding warrants (including overseas warrants) or other relevant details recorded.

This technology has been described by many Garda members with whom the Authority engaged with as **“game-changing”**. There is continued innovative work being undertaken to develop more apps that make policing more efficient and effective.

Impact on the service to the public

The mobility devices enable information led policing in real time, outside the station environment.

GardaSAFE

In 2023 the Garda Síochána completed the full implementation of the GardaSAFE call-taking and dispatch system. As per the Garda Síochána:

“What this new system means for the public is, now, when they call their local Garda Station and their call requires the dispatch of a Garda resource (e.g. Garda in an Official Patrol Car, Unmarked Garda Car, Armed Support Unit), the call will be transferred to a qualified call taker at the Regional Control Centre. This call taker will handle the call and provide the fastest and most suitable Garda response”.

The GardaSAFE system was developed to improve the response to calls for service from the public to 999 and to local stations. The GardaSAFE system is an important tool in ensuring that the issues raised within the CAD 999 Review are addressed and ensure that similar failings in response to calls does not reoccur. Each incident reported through GardaSAFE automatically transfers to the PULSE system ensuring no incidents are lost. Once transferred the incidents are captured and presented on the Performance Assurance Framework (PAF) system within stations so that local sergeants can ensure that they are allocated to Gardaí to follow up. In terms of information led policing, GardaSAFE represents a significant improvement in the information available in real time to a Garda

responding to an incident. This information can assist in informing the response given but also in keeping a Garda safe.

Impact on the service to the public

The introduction of GardaSAFE caused some **concerns in communities**. There was a belief that in having to ring regional control rooms on the 999 number rather than the local station, that Gardaí would then have to travel from those locations to respond to the call. In fact, the GardaSAFE system allows dispatchers in the control rooms a view on screen of all available patrol and unmarked cars and units, in terms of whether they are currently busy and where they are located. The Control Room staff are now **uniquely positioned** to see on screen which Garda resource is best positioned to respond. In dispatching the car to respond, the dispatcher using GardaSAFE can provide the responding Garda with an eircode. S/he can immediately tell the Garda the nature of the incident reported and drawing off the PULSE system s/he can tell the Garda while she is on route whether there have been incidents at that location before, whether there are licensed firearms at the location, whether there are any domestic abuse orders in place or warrants existing for that address. Meanwhile if any information is known regarding for example the vehicle used in an incident this information can be sent to other units using an alert to allow for example Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) to identify the car on the road.

This is a significant move forward from the older system.

5.3. What now?

The Authority is aware of the Garda Síochána's stated need for continued momentum to progress and develop technology to deliver a better policing response. Without sustained investment however the progress made will regress as investment is required not only for new systems but also to continually enhance existing systems so that they do not fall behind. There is also investment required that is critical to the success of new systems but is not visible. For example, there has been significant public awareness of the introduction of the proof of concept of body cameras for Gardaí. It is understandable that this is considered by the public in terms of the purchase of the cameras and perhaps licensing. However, in order for the cameras to be employed to their full potential and to be of benefit, investment is needed in a Digital Evidence Management System as well as the technology needed to store, sort and properly manage the material collected.

An information-led organisation needs access to sophisticated digital architecture and highly skilled personnel if it is to be able to use the vast amount of data and information available to it. This is work that is largely invisible to the public but tangible in its policing benefits to the public and other organisations within the justice sector. The Garda Síochána organisation has begun to build its in-house capacity and would like to reduce its dependence on outside contractors to supplement its staffing needs. Higher capacity in-house in the Garda Síochána would deliver better continuity, as well as better value for money. This requires sustained multi annual investment that offers certainty and an ability to plan confidently across a number of years.

A focus within the data and technology vision is now the development of systems that support the organisation in its own HR and finance systems. A new HRIS system is at least 2 years away from implementation and the Authority has been assured that systems will be updated in the interim. This

type of investment will result in benefits for the public with the Garda Síochána organisation enabled to understand its own costs and how they relate to various types of policing activity. It can also better keep track of issues around performance and conduct and discipline, all of which are important for the legitimacy and public confidence in the service.

There has been considerable learning for the organisation in the roll out of various systems during the past number of years. The Authority would highlight its observation that increased communication to the Garda workforce as to why a particular system was being brought in and its likely benefits would have been helpful. In addition, better use of the early adopters to talk to divisions about their experience would have perhaps allayed what were genuine fears within certain divisions that the introduction of the system would 'break them'. The volume of change encountered was also problematic, not least given the other changes happening at the same time. In such circumstances regular communication that addresses fears and is seen to respond to these early concerns is critical. These include not only the fears of Garda members and Garda staff but also the public. This is particularly true in relation to the introduction of GardaSAFE and the view that response times would likely be increased and communities were no longer 'allowed' to talk to their local station. While the Garda organisation made efforts to engage the media on the likely improvements to the policing service to the public, it may be that an additional route in future would be to engage with large community based organisation who could use their networks to inform the public.

5.4. Conclusion

In any organisation so large, it is challenging to keep rolling out new information systems to every division and simultaneously keep up to date with technology before it is outdated. The Commissioner acknowledged that there is still a lot more to do within the Garda Síochána to bring its technology and business processes to present-day standards. For example, in relation to the use of Body Worn Cameras, while it is regarded as an important stride forward in modernising the service, without the right system to support the review of footage it has been described as an analogue process for digital evidence. A focus on HR and finance systems within the organisation is now imperative within the next stage of development.

Technology is always evolving and not least in the area of law enforcement and policing. The Authority believes and has articulated its view to the Garda Commissioner and the Department of Justice that there is a need within the organisation for an overarching policy on technology. The same concerns that exist for the public with regard to policing – fairness, proportionality, legality and non-discrimination – are as relevant, if not amplified when technology increases policing capability. New technologies while they can assist policing can also be intrusive and infringe on the rights of individuals. Rather than address these concerns afresh with each device or platform that evolves, one overarching framework that sets out for the public the Garda Síochána's commitments to the public regarding its use of technology and how it will ensure that its use is informed by human rights and ethically deployed is essential.

Finally having made significant progress, the Authority would emphasise that investment in technology be considered alongside consideration of Garda numbers as a key contributor to keeping people safe.